CRUSADER'S CALL

Written by

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Based on, Edward Wilton III

Film Title: Crusader’s Call

Genre: Drama, Military, Family

FADE IN:

EXT. MILITARY BASE - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

A crisp autumn breeze rolls across the base. The last remnants of EDMUND’s military life fade as JENNIFER pulls up in her car. She spots EDMUND, duffel bag slung over his shoulder, standing near the curb.

JENNIFER steps out, smiling.

JENNIFER
Hey, Eli!

EDMUND
Hey, Jen!

They embrace. A brief, tight hug—comforting, familiar. EDMUND tosses his duffel into the backseat before sliding into the passenger seat.

INT. JENNIFER’S CAR - DRIVING - AFTERNOON

The road stretches ahead, lined with autumn trees, their leaves golden in the late afternoon light.

JENNIFER
How does it feel? Finally done?

EDMUND
Strange... but good. No more roll calls, no more formations.

Just—freedom.

JENNIFER
You’ve been counting down the days. I bet it feels unreal.

EDMUND
Yeah... It’s weird. For years, everything was routine—

wake up, train, eat, sleep, repeat. Now it’s just... open-ended.

JENNIFER
You'll adjust. You're not the first soldier to go through this.

EDMUND
I know. But it's not easy. You spend so long as part of a unit,

and then one day, you're just... not. No more orders. No more mission.

JENNIFER
You'll find your mission. Maybe it's just different now.

EDMUND
Maybe...

JENNIFER
So, how was your last day?

EDMUND
Busy, but it felt good to finally be done.
(grinning)
I'm ready for some downtime.

JENNIFER
You deserve it. I'm proud of you.

EDMUND
Thanks, Jen. It's been a long time coming.

JENNIFER
My day was crazy. We had a huge project due.

Everyone was losing their minds. But we pulled it off.

EDMUND
You always manage to pull through.

EXT. WILSON FAMILY HOME - EVENING

The car pulls into the driveway. EDMUND and JENNIFER step out, the smell of turkey and stuffing heavy in the air.

The front door swings open. EDMUND'S MOTHER, ANNA, rushes out, arms wide.

ANNA
Eli!

She hugs him tightly. EDMUND breathes in the familiar scent of home.

EDMUND
It’s good to be home, Mom.

JENNIFER
It’s so nice to finally meet you, Mrs. Wilson.

ANNA
Call me Anna. And thank you for coming.

INT. WILSON FAMILY HOME - THANKSGIVING DINNER - LATER

The table is filled with plates of food. Laughter, warmth. EDMUND’S FATHER, a retired Army veteran, watches his son with pride.

EDMUND’S FATHER
You’ve served well, son.
(raising a glass)
I’m proud of you.

EDMUND
Just trying to do my part.

CLARA, EDMUND’S younger sister, passes the mashed potatoes.

CLARA
Tell us about Fort Benning.

EDMUND
It was intense. Training, drills... and everyone’s been talking about Ukraine.

ANNA sets down her fork, concern in her eyes.

ANNA
Your Uncle Yuri’s still there. He refuses to leave.

EDMUND
It’s brave of him. A lot of people are staying to fight.

EDMUND’S FATHER
Yuri’s stubborn. But I get it. If it were my home, I wouldn’t leave either.

EDMUND
There's this fighter over there—callsign Valkyrie. A Russian fighting for Ukraine. She saved a teammate in Mariupol under heavy fire.

CLARA
What happened?

EDMUND
They were pinned down in the Azovstal Steel Plant. She ran straight through gunfire to drag a wounded guy to cover. Kept him alive until help arrived.

JENNIFER, quiet until now, stares at her wine, swirling it.

CLARA
People are resilient. It's incredible.

ANNA
I just hope this ends soon. I can't bear to lose Yuri.

Edmund squeezes her hand.

EDMUND
We'll keep praying for him, Mom.

INT. WILSON FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A fire crackles. The mood is lighter, until—

CLARA
So, Eli, what now?

Edmund hesitates. Then—

EDMUND
I've been thinking about going to Ukraine.

Silence.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Just thinking about it…

ANNA's face pales.

ANNA
No. You have your whole life ahead of you.

EDMUND
I know, Mom. But I feel like I need to do something.

ANNA
You could go to law school. The GI Bill will cover it.

You could do so much more here.

EDMUND
This is where we come from.

EDMUND'S FATHER
Do you think they'll see you as anything more than cannon fodder? They'll send you straight to the front.

EDMUND
These are people fighting for freedom. They're not just cannon fodder!

EDMUND'S FATHER
This isn't a game, son. People die over a can of tuna.

The room thickens with tension. JENNIFER shifts uncomfortably, finishing off her wine.

CLARA
Why don't we have some dessert?

JENNIFER
Great idea!

She stands quickly, slightly unsteady, helping ANNA with the pie.

EXT. WILSON FAMILY HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

EDMUND and JENNIFER walk toward her car. She fumbles for the keys but stumbles slightly. EDMUND catches her arm.

EDMUND
Maybe I should drive.

JENNIFER
I’m fine...

EDMUND
Yeah, let’s not take any chances.

He takes the keys from her hand, guiding her to the passenger seat. She plops down with a tired sigh.

JENNIFER
You’re a good man, Eli.

EDMUND chuckles, starting the engine.

The car pulls away, disappearing into the quiet night.

CLOSE-UP ON EDMUND'S FACE - His expression is unreadable, lost in thought as the glow of streetlights flickers across his features. The weight of the evening lingers in his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.